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ABSTRACT

Four six-year-olds and their mothers were observed during the summer prior to starting first grade in a study designed to expand knowledge of the nature of verbal interactions during book reading. All of the children had some knowledge of letters and were making satisfactory progress in reading. The seven or eight observation sessions were taped and an observer noted both verbal and nonverbal communication. Mothers read one book with one to four words on each page and read the comprehension exercise at the end. The coding system was designed to describe both the structure and content of the book reading interaction. The first set of analyses concerned the relative proportions of turns each mother or child took during the book reading interactions. The second aspect of analysis involved ascertaining whether or not the child was just responding to questions or statements from the mother or actually initiating the turn. Attention to print levels was also ascertained. Results showed that the majority of verbal turns by all the mothers focused on the word level, although one mother also focused many of her turns on the letter level. The children also showed differences in their turns, with some being assertive and leading the interaction by either reading outright or by making statements about the text. In all of the homes, there was literacy engagement; and while some children were being directed more than others, the children have all become successful readers, according to their parents' understanding of literacy and their teacher's estimation of a reader. (Tables and references are included, and samples of coded transcripts, a profile of book reading interactions, and a description of awareness responses and print level attention are appended.) (AEW)

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Abstract

A Description of the Interaction among mothers and six-year old children during book reading

Janice P. Stewart

The nature of interactions during mother-child reading episodes were examined by observing four pairs of mothers and children during the summer prior to first grade. An analysis of the speech acts with respect to the teaching stratgesis and communication structure indicated differences related to parents intended outcomes. The results show that parents who engaged in deliberate literacy events in the home used strategies consistent with maintaining comprehension rather than strict reliance on phonetic performance.

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Description of the Interaction Among Mothers and Six-Year-Old Children During Book Reading

This paper represents an analysis of parent-child interaction during book reading and how literacy experiences at home and children's awareness of how they are learning to read contribute to this process. This study investigated the verbal interaction between children who had completed kindergarten and their mothers while they were engaged in a book reading event.

Previous research has frequently observed the role of parents reading to their young children prior to entry into school. This research has shown how parental style may differ due to function of age and competence of the child (Pellegrini, Brody, & Sigel, 1985). It has been hypothesized that children may acquire word meanings by adults naming objects (Werner & Kaplan, 1952). As shown by Ninio (1983), Ninio and Bruner (1978) and Snow and Perlman (in press), young children do acquire knowledge through parents labelling and encouraging children to do so during story reading. Lazzari, Bender and Kello (in preparation) analyzed 38 parent/child dyads and found evidence to support the belief that when parents are reading to preschool children, they are functioning as "teacher" and do influence children's language and reading development.

Picturebook reading and story reading are the most common forms of interaction that occur between some parents and young children. Both kinds of interaction provide a rich context for

language learning and for the development of story comprehension (Harkness, 1982; DeLoache & DeMendoza, 1983). However the structure and content of the interaction among parents and children may vary as a result of the home literacy environment and sociocultural factors (Heath, 1982 & Schickendanz, 1984). Mothers play important roles in reading to and around children, especially in responding to questions children have about print they see and produce themselves (Mason, 1983). Literate adults simplify, clarify and explain as they read to the child. These interactions provide a structure in which the adult elaborates, expands and relates information in books to the child's personal responses. Cochran-Smith (1985) found home and school interactions very similar for the upper-middle class preschool children she studied, but noted that investigations of other cultures have found different patterns including not reading to children at all (Feitelson, 1985; Heath, 1982).

Although there has been wide attention paid to the young child and parents reading picture books, storybooks and favorite books there has not been significant attention paid to the beginning reader and how the interaction proceeds with parents attempting to read with those children. Neither has previous research examined children's awareness of learning to read or the relationship of how the parent assists the child during this sometimes difficult stage.

An important component in the book reading interaction is what has been described as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This is part of the interaction between what the child knows and what she comes to know with assistance. Thus interaction involving scaffolding has been analyzed to discuss how the immature learner comes to know; this has been a topic in both reading (Brown,) and math (Reeves,). Parents, teachers and more advanced children work within this zone by scaffolding the conversation or building one comment or question on the previous one, leading the child from a situation where the task is modeled to one in which the child takes over (Lehr, 1985; Teale, 1981; Snow, 1983). Literate parents do not wait and allow language to unfold but engage in deliberate ways to teach it. Adults impact on children's learning and facilitate this learning by regulating the difficulty of the task, consequently they are acting as scaffolds for the children. Furthermore, the adult provides the arrangement of appropriate sequencing of materials and tasks for the child. As adults and children participate together in activities the adult transmits information and skills to help the child become literate.

The nature of the interaction may depend on the child's knowledge base, as children become more competent, adults are more demanding and less directive of the children (Pellegrini & Brody, 1985). As DeLoache and DeMendoza (1983) noted in a study examining mothers and infants during story reading, "the mother

provides just enough support to enable the child to succeed, but not more" (p. 24). The requests by the mother for the child to say or do something varied as function of age. Harkness and Miller (1982) found the mother-child interactions changed over time. The mother gradually increased the length of each session by reading longer text sections and indicating or encouraging the child to say or do something depending on the age of the child.

Interactions have also been observed to vary as a function of communication ability. Pellegrini and Brody (1985) compared parent-child book reading interactions over age (4-5 year olds) and communication states (normal or speech disability) and found parents adjusted their interaction styles to their child's level of communication competence.

What and how parents interact with their children may provide a framework for expectations and rules for reading. Snow looked at what children derived from reading books and found that children developed a meta-contract with the following understandings: books are for reading, pictures are for representations and for naming and book events may occur outside of reading time (Snow, 1983). Nino and Bruner (1978) found that the mother's dialogue associated with picture book reading directed the child's attention to certain features in the book, such as asking questions, providing labels, and giving feedback by repeating or extending the child's responses.

It is important to look at home influences as a necessary component of literacy development. Although concentrated literacy may be achieved in school for most children, what they learn in the home context as they interact with the immediate environment is largely a result of early experiences with oral and written language. When looking at children from different communities, it is prudent to examine the home background with respect to the importance placed on literacy in the home. How parents provide and interact to promote, provide or observe literacy may be quite different. Heath (1983), in her intensive study in the Piedmont communities, showed that various parents have different styles of reading to their children. These styles are hypothesized as being an integral factor as to whether the child learns to read easily or not. Variations in home literacy contexts are related to children's literacy experiences and awareness. Parents, guided by beliefs and behaviors about literacy, mold the child's literacy environments and experiences accordingly. Adults play a large role in determining what objects (toys, books) are available, what events occur and are allowed (television shows, trips to the supermarket, story reading), what chores the child is involved in and what the child observes the parents doing as literacy events. Durkin (1966) noted that early readers had the benefit of more reading materials at home and parents who were much more involved in helping them to learn to read.

In her investigation of reading in the home environment, Heath (198x) found that the way in which parents interact with their child to promote, provide or support literacy may be quite different. These variations may be a result of cultural, social, economic or parental educational factors. Parents may label different parts of the storybook reading as important, ask different questions and engage in different types of interactions. What the parents transmit through verbal statements during story reading or other types of literacy events will influence what children come to know about literacy.

Stewart and Mason (1985) observed in the homes of four children and found that the parents were involved in monitoring the child's daily living or deliberate literacy events. In other words, there was pressure for either literacy closely tied to reading or regulation of activities. The amount and type of literacy events varied among the homes from very little specific or directed literacy events involving story reading to informal comments concerning play or communication events with siblings and peers. Furthermore, it appeared for these children that the home literacy events were related to their awareness of how they were learning to read. Verbal responses from the children described what was happening in their home with respect to reading.

Children's understanding of how they are learning to read has been studied by Johns (1966) and Denny and Weintraub (1963,

1966), among others. The common finding was that young children were quite vague in their responses, and when they do express an awareness of how they are learning to read, it is by discussing procedures, "We get into groups." Research since the 60's indicates that children can express themselves when talking about learning to read. By using a more lenient definition of reading, by employing a range of tasks that are given to the same children over time, and by using scoring techniques that include an analysis of error patterns, it is now apparent that children can talk about learning to read (Canney & Winograd, 1979; Hiebert, 198x; Mason, Stewart & Dunning, 1986; Stewart, Mason & Kawakami, 1984; Stewart & Mason, 1985; Stewart, 1986). In the studies by Stewart and Mason (1985, 1986), kindergarten children were asked to both talk about and write about how they were learning to read in school and at home. The awareness responses changed over time, reflecting children's increasing sense of the learning to read process. In addition, the content of their comments shifted from focusing on letters ("Know your alphabet") and sounds ("You have to say the letter") to decoding skills ("Try to read the words, put all the sounds together and say the words"), to metacognitive monitoring by the end of second grade for the better readers ("I look at the word, try to sound it out silently, think about it in my mind and try to remember what it means."

These awareness responses were also found to be reflective of the home experiences. The child who engaged in a minimum of deliberate literacy and story reading in home experiences described in his awareness responses that he was "not learning to read at home." The child with the highest incidence of deliberate literacy experiences indicated in her awareness responses that home was the place where you learn to read and that it involves story reading and writing as well as learning the words and knowing sounds of letters.

The analysis presented here of the parent-child interactions during book reading events can provide a window for observing how parental beliefs and behaviors about literacy help to provide a home literacy context which shapes children's reading awareness and competencies.

In summary, the present study was designed to expand our knowledge of the nature of verbal interactions that occur during book reading of mothers and young readers. The goals of the study included: (a) providing descriptive data on joint mother-child book reading, (b) analyzing the structure and content of the interactions, (c) examining the types of strategies that the mother used to aid the child, and (d) relating the home literacy events and children's awareness of learning to read to the structure of the book reading interactions.

Method

Subject

The subjects were four pairs of mothers and their children. There were two boys and two girls, all six years old. One boy (Joseph) and a girl (Donna) attended a school in a rural town about forty miles from a major university. Both these children received instruction in kindergarten that emphasized decoding. The other boy (Sean) and a girl (Erica) attended a magnet school in a university town. Sean and Erica were in a kindergarten program that focused on individualized reading and small group activities.

The children were selected as participants for this study in the beginning of their kindergarten year on the basis of (a) some knowledge of letters (WRAT and ERT), (b) low SES, (c) parents' willingness to participate in home observation, and (d) teachers' assessment that the children were making satisfactory progress in reading. One child, Erica, was a reader during this book reading interaction study. The other three children were attempting to read or were able to read very simple text.

Procedure

Four children were observed during the summer before entering first grade, as part of a longitudinal study. The children were observed in their homes 7 to 8 times over a two-month period during the summer for 1 to 2 hours each time between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The book reading session

took place during the next to last observation for each child. During this observation session the mothers were asked to read a book with their child as they normally would do. The sessions were taped while an observer noted both verbal and nonverbal communication. The observer tried to maintain the role of a friendly, nonevaluating, nondirective and nonparticipating person who is interested in what families do.

The book was a handmade paper book with one to four words on each page. Each page was illustrated with predictable pictures. The child who was a reader read through this book quickly, not allowing any interaction to occur between the child and mother. Therefore, another book reading session was coded. The book was child-selected and included several short stories and comprehension exercises that followed each story. She read one story and the comprehension exercise that followed the story.

Since all observations were naturalistic and accepted as they occurred, the setting for the book reading session varied for each child. Sean and his mother sat on one side of the dining room table while two toddlers that his mother kept crawled around the floor. Erica sat at the kitchen table with her mother while her cousin Terry, age three, tried to participate. Donna and her mother sat outside at the patio table while her brother, David, age two, interrupted with his own "reading." Joseph and his mother sat on the living room couch while his younger brother, Dennis, age two, played with a toy.

The audio tapes of the book reading sessions were transcribed. The transcripts were verified and nonverbal communication was recorded from the observation notes.

Coding

The coding system was designed to describe both the structure and content of the book reading interaction. The codes were designed to yield information that would allow us to analyze the nature of the strategies used by both the parents and children during the book reading interaction. The categories were expected to provide an insight to the relative contribution of the two partners, the parameters of their contributions and how they approach the levels of print during the book reading interactions.

Appendix A gives a detailed description of the coding system that was applied to the transcripts. Generally, each speech act was coded using a coding system derived from Mason and Au (1981) and DeLoache and Mendoza (1984). Each statement question or comment made by the child and mother was coded. The verbal interaction patterns were coded by looking at the turns of each speaker. A turn is made up of speech acts. A speech act is defined as a complete expression consisting of a word or groups of words intended to communicate an idea, statement, question or response during the book reading interaction. A turn includes all verbalizing and pointing relevant to a given topic by one person before either (a) that person changed the topic, or (b)

the other person said something about the same or a different topic. It is possible for one speaker to have several turns before the other speaker responds or makes a statement.

The children speech acts were coded as either assertives or responsives. The assertives included voluntary reading, statements or comments that the child makes that are not responses to a directive or statement from the mother. The responsives included speech acts that were in response to the mother's directive or statement. The mother's speech acts were coded as requestives or responsives. A requestive speech act is a directive or a statement that requests the child to carry out or figure out an action, or supplies information, rules or explanations. Responsives are negative, neutral or positive statements that include praise, correction or confirmation of an answer without any value attached. Aid statements were usually speech acts by the parents that demonstrated the response was intended to signal an answer to the child by supplying partial information. To assure reliability, a second scorer independently coded a random sample of 15% turns. For types of speech acts used in each turn, we achieved a .96 reliability.

Both the mother's and child's speech acts or turns were coded according to the kind of reading strategy indicated by the verbal exchanges with respect to the attention given to the print level. The print levels were (1) Book/Management, (2) Pictures, (3) Words, (4) Letters. Book or management statements, questions

or comments are those speech acts that relate to book conventions or book reading. Pictures are speech acts that refer to pictures in the book. Words were statements, question or comments that focused on words, phrases or sentences. Letters were statements, questions or comments that called attention to decoding, letters or sounds. The reliability on the levels of print was .89.

Turns. The first set of analyses concerned the relative proportions of turns each mother or child took during the book reading interactions. Erica's interaction yielded a very high number of turns (93) with the child taking most of the turns (59) (see Table 1). This may be a result of Erica's independent reading and her mother's mode for interacting with her. Donna and her mother had a very small amount of turns during their book reading interaction, 8 for Donna's mother and 7 for Donna. This is typical of other interactions which were observed during the summer and will be discussed in detail later. Joseph and his mother had the highest number of turns (100) but Joseph only accounted for 38% of the turns; his mother took 62%. This is probably due to her attention to the letter and sound level of print since a large amount of this book reading interaction involved decoding words. Sean and his mother took 65 turns to complete their interaction. Again, like Joseph, Sean's mother took most of the turns (40 or 62%). This was not unexpected since Sean's mother almost always guides his reading activities.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Initiation. The second aspect of the analysis involved ascertaining whether or not the child was just responding to questions or statements from the mother or if the child was the initiator or the turn. Erica made the most assertive statements. Again she was reading independently and in control of most of the interactions. Although Donna is reflected as being the next highest in assertive statements (57%) (see Table 2), this is not a true representation. If you look at Table 2 you will notice that Donna's responses were 3 turns and her assertive statements were 4, judging from the daily interaction that occurred over the summer between Donna and her parents, it is probably accurate to say that her interactions are typically evenly distributed with respect to who is in control. A major portion of Sean and Joseph's interactions were on responses to their mother's statements, directives or questions (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here.

Attention to print levels. One purpose of this study was to describe what aspects of the print seem to be most salient to the child and mother during the book reading interaction. For all mothers, the emphasis was on directing the child to the word,

phrase or sentence level. Joseph's mother was the only mother that placed a mentionable amount of statements, questions or comments in the context of letters or sounds. All mothers used few management statements, "Turn the page." Three of the mothers referred to the pictures to help the child read the text, "What does it look like?" "What is he doing?" Erica's mother did not refer to the pictures; most of her directives, questions or statements centered around drawing Erica's attention to a word she read incorrectly, rereading of a sentence or facilitating comprehension. Common responses and statements used by Erica's mother were, "What does that say?" or when Erica read, "It is sweet to taste, we taste it with our nose," and her mother responded with a question, "With your nose?" Erica's mother directed 91% of her statements to words, phrases and sentences. Sean's mother had had the highest proportions of statements related to pictures (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here.

Since many of the mothers' turns were in response to the child (depending on the structure of the interaction), it follows that the children's proportions of print levels within the interaction would be similar to their mothers'.

This was not the case with Donna. Most of her turns were tied to the picture content of the book (example: Donna read

"Eating cookies" when the text was "mm mm cookies."). The picture showed a boy eating cookies. Donna's mother did not correct her reading, but accepted the words she read. Her mother called her attention to the picture once when she wanted her to say, "tummy ache" and there was a picture of a boy holding his stomach.

Joseph divided his turns between letters and words. Since most of his reading was focused on decoding words, this is not surprising. Sean spent more time on the picture content than his mother. He directed almost an equal number of his turns to both the word level while his mother directed her turns at the word level (words, phrases or sentences) using the picture and letter level only once.

Types of speech acts. To obtain a comprehensive picture of what is really occurring during the book reading interaction, we coded the speech acts with respect to whether they were directives, statements, repetitions, aid, positive, neutral or negative (see Appendix B for a detailed description). The results indicate that all of the mothers used directives when helping the child read. Erica's mother used the least amount of directives, most of her speech acts were directed toward giving aid (50%, see Table 5). This category is very interesting and was further analyzed because it represented what kind of strategies the mothers used and how they implemented the strategy.

Insert Table 5 about here.

Three of the parents used repetitions, such as repeating a word phrase or sentence for the child. There were very few statements used by mothers. Most of the evaluations were either positive ("good") or neutral ("o.k., o.k.").

Structure of the strategies. The aid category reflects how the mothers assist the child when they are responding incorrectly. An analysis of the content of the turns which were coded as aid yielded three kinds of strategies, phonic, word (meaning word, phrase or sentences) and semantic. The next question to ask was how are these strategies implemented? The range of how the child was assisted varied across mothers with one waiting until the child had completed the sentence before giving aid to sounding out each letter for the child to simply supplying the word. (See profile of Book Reading Interactions, Appendix C.)

Erica's mother used the word strategy when she corrected her reading of "it's" to "it is;" she also corrected her pronunciation, supplied words that Erica omitted while reading or emphasized syllables. Her phonics strategy consisted of reminding Erica of certain vowel rules (see Appendix D). Her semantic strategy included drawing Erica's attention to making

sense out of her reading of the text by relating it to the experience.

Erica's mother initiated these strategies by waiting until Erica had completed several sentences or hesitated on a word. She also repeated the sentence or phrase that included the problem word or words. Erica's mother asked guiding questions, thus directing Erica toward phonic, semantic, or word corrections. Erica's mother was also prompt to self-correct aloud to indicate to Erica her own mistake, "my fault, it's muddy."

Donna's mother uses aid once. Donna had read the text using the pictures and supplying her own words. When she said, "eating milk" she was relying on a pattern that she had created from the pictures, "eating sandwiches, eating cookies." Her mother did not make any corrections until Donna said "eating milk." Her mother responded by giving aid that focused Donna's attention on the meaning of what she had just read or said.

The structure of Sean's mother's strategies was based on phonic, words and semantics (see Appendix D). His mother usually provided cues in several sentences building up to a point where she feels the information is sufficient. When trying to get her to read the word "lunch," she gave semantic cues. After Sean was unable to give the correct response from his mother's cue and the picture information, she said, "What time of day do you think he was eating that; do you think it was breakfast or dinner, or what

do you think it was?" Sean responded, "Breakfast." His mother continued, "You think that might have been breakfast with sandwiches? What else could it have been?" Sean still had difficulty responding correctly and said, "dinner." His mother continued her assistance by turning to phonic cues, "Look at this; it begins with an L. What other meal do you have that begins with an L?" This time Sean responded correctly with the word, "lunch." Sean's mother used various strategies to give Sean aid. She used questions and provided information that helped Sean pay attention to meaning, letter and word connections.

Joseph's mother's strategies were primarily to assist Joseph by urging him to sound out the words. She aided this process by either beginning the sounding out of a word or completing it. Often she did not provide the completed word but waited for Joseph to blend and come up with the word. Joseph's mother, like Erica's mother, reminded him of certain vowel rules: "Remember what this sounds like, the y sound is what?" or "Remember that's silent, isn't it?" Joseph's mother did use some aid that focused on meaning at the word level, "It's another word for his stomach." She also tried to help Joseph relate to the text by making associations with his experiences, "What do we call Jim?" and when Joseph's response was still incorrect she provided aid at the word level and finally at the letter-sound level when she sounded out the word tummy, "t-u-m-e-e."

Discussion

A look at the structure and content of mother and child interaction of a subset of children from a larger study indicates how the parent frames and communicates aspects of the literacy experience of story reading to the child. By examining these interactions we can see how the parent directs the child to the important features of the experience as perceived by the parent. As suggested by Mason (1985), it is not a matter of should the parent focus on the letter and sound correspondence, meaning or picture or word learning, but the effect of what the parent does depends on the materials and goals, and whether they are to remember the words taught, understand better their meanings or just enjoy the experience.

Erica's mother stops her at appropriate points in the text and directs her to use strategies that will provide comprehension. Analysis of the home literacy events revealed a high occurrence of deliberate high literacy events. Erica's mother's behavior was typical of many instances of book reading. One may suggest that the high incidence of aid (90%) provided during the book reading interaction may have been a result of Erica's reading level and being able to read more difficult text that provided more of an opportunity for directing aid. However, observations of Erica's mother working with a younger child, a non-reader, demonstrated that she was consistent in her strategies. She allowed the child to be assertive, taking most

of the turns, directing the child's attention to the word, phrases or sentences.

All of the parents used the semantic cues when giving aid. It appears that the mothers realized that they were supporting and facilitating learning by the semantic contingency of their questions, answers and comments.

The majority of verbal turns by all of the mothers focused on the word level. However, Joseph's mother also focused many of her turns at the letter level. The structure and content of the interaction between Joseph and his mother is interesting in that it mirrors his school instruction. He was in an instructional program that was strictly decoding and included a list of practice in sounding out words. Joseph was successful in this program but not a reader at the end of kindergarten. According to results from a study (Stewart & Mason, 1985) that looked at the awareness response of these four children with respect to how they were learning to read at home and at school, Joseph indicated that he felt he was learning how to read by learning his letters and sounding out words (Appendix E). He also indicated that "you learn to read in school." The strategies that his mother used while Joseph attempted to read the little book centered around sounding out words and providing the word after many unsuccessful attempts by Joseph. Observations in the home indicated that Joseph valued playing with his peers as the most important and frequent activity (Table 6). His mother noted

that he occasionally listens to record books with his younger brother.

Insert Table 6 about here.

From these three sources (Joseph's interaction with his mother, home literacy events and awareness responses), we can see what Joseph's mother sees as important for reading. She knows he needs a strong base for phonics and instructs him as he is being taught in school. However, she is also aware of his nature and desire to be with his peers, with whom he uses his communication skills. Now Sean's mother is also aware of Sean's desire to play with his peers, but her approach is different.

Most of Sean's mother's turns focused on getting Sean to use both word and picture information. Much of her aid focused on meaning and kept building in information until Sean was successful in responding. This type of interaction was typical for Sean's mother. The analysis of the literacy events (Stewart & Mason, 1985) showed that 41% of the events were deliberate literacy events. These were book reading events. Sean's mother did allow him to play with his friends during the day, but insisted that he read with her or his father at night. He was also instructed to bring library books home from the library (last summer he brought some toys). The differences in the interaction pattern between Sean and Joseph is not just of

content (one more decoding and the other more meaning) but also of intent. Sean's mother allowed him to read through the story first on his own. He read the pictures and used his own words. She wants Sean to be a reader but also to love reading. Sean has several older brothers and sisters who were reading before the end of kindergarten. It is also important to note that his school instruction was similar to his mother's approach, some emphasis on decoding, meaning and reading for enjoyment with peers or siblings. Neither Joseph or Sean were reading at the end of kindergarten, but both were readers by December of first grade.

Donna's session with her mother was very brief, consisting of only 15 turns. Donna's mother did not encourage correct reading of the book. The other three mothers did. Donna's mother observed her reading by using the picture information. Only when Donna made an error that was not semantically appropriate did her mother stop her. This was consistent with the literacy events in the home and the vagueness surrounding Donna's awareness responses. Most of the encounters with book reading did not involve specific decoding strategies or letter sound correspondences. The dialogue was directed toward content, what's the picture about or reasons for coloring something. Donna was not reading at the end of kindergarten but did read by the middle of first grade.

These children also showed differences in their turns during the interaction. Some of the children were assertive and led the interaction by either reading outright or making statements about the text. Joseph made the fewest child initiated statements, only 1 (3% of all his responses), while Sean had 8 (32%) and Erin had 38 (64%). Donna had 7 turns and 4 of these were assertive. This balance was typical of many of Donna's interactions with her parents. Because Donna was using picture information solely, it is easy to understand how she was an initiator in the interaction. Joseph's interaction involves so much decoding and was structured to be precise, preventing him from being assertive. All of these children were from low SES families, all parents reported reading to them by age one, and all had a range of books in the home. These findings were also supported by a substantial of low SES families from the larger study (Mason, Stewart, & Dunning, 1985). The low children from the rural community were from home environments where very few deliberate literacy events occurring in the home over the summer prior to first grade revealed both children experienced less than 25% of deliberate literacy (regulation, playing and communicating with peers and siblings). Teale (in press) and Anderson and Stokes (1984) also support this finding among other low income families and note that it is not apparent whether these other literacy events are satisfactory alternatives to story reading.

Erica and Sean, who are also low income SES, did exhibit a high incidence of deliberate literacy events, primarily story reading and book associated events with the parents (Stewart, 1985), 41-71%. Although this is too small a sample to draw any broad generalizations, these differences and similarities among the children and their mothers during the interaction, literacy events at home, and their awareness give us some insight into how mothers structure literacy for their children. Sean's mother allowed him to read for entertainment up until the end of kindergarten, when she saw he was not reading as well as her four older children. She then proceeded with direct reading and writing instruction which included written drill, workbooks, storybook reading and guided assistance. Eric's mother, who has contact with a Headstart program through her job, and has some junior college experience, stresses deliberate reading instruction with an identified intent of making Erica a better reader and a successful student in school. Erin's mother's aid during most events is similar to the kindergarten instruction that Erica received. Donna's mother allowed her to interact with books as part of her play or daily living schedule. Situations were created to encourage Donna to become involved in more deliberate literacy events but with the understanding that Donna was shy and would unfold eventually. In this respect, Donna's mother's book reading interaction was not like Donna's instruction in school. Joseph's mother allowed him to engage in

independent book experiences with record to tape book, alone or with his younger brother. When she read with him it was more to draw his attention to the print and to acquire phonetic information.

In all of these homes, there is literacy engagement. All of the mothers structure the strategies and content of their interaction with their child according to how they perceive what is appropriate and natural during that experience. Some children are being more directed than others. Donna is experiencing literacy as a natural part of daily living; Erica realized what is needed to be the best reader in the class and is encouraged by her mother. Sean understands the importance of reading books, but is more interested in playing with his peers. His mother has identified what she feels to be important and works with Sean accordingly. Joseph is also more concerned with peer interactions and regards reading activities as part of school and something to be done there. His mother has reinforced his idea of school type reading by her emphasis on decoding.

Judging from the data gathered from these interactions and the observations, it seems that although there are differences in the opportunity for the children to engage in deliberate literacy events and differences in some of the strategies used when reading with the children, they have become successful (according to their parents' understanding of literacy and their teacher's estimation of a reader, Mason, Stewart & Dunning, 1984). These

children have expressed how one learns to read differently, but in most respects these responses do mirror their home experiences and how their mothers interact with them; these children have achieved success in reading.

Given the indication that parents do use various strategies when book reading with their child, it may be interesting to study mothers with nonreaders and as the children become readers. Do some parents alter their structure or content as the child becomes a more sophisticated reader?, Does the parent stay with the interaction and try to facilitate metacognitive skills?, or Does she abandon aid because the child is reading?

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Table 1

Mother and Child Interaction Reflected in Proportions

Speaker	No. of Turns	Total No. of Turns	Proportion
Joseph's Mother	62	100	.62
Joseph	38		.38
Donna's Mother	8	15	.53
Donna	7		.47
Sean's Mother	40	65	.62
Sean	25		.38
Erica's Mother	34	93	.37
Erica	59		.63

Table 2

Mother and Child Bookreading Interaction Initiation Pattern

	Turns			
	Assertive		Responsive	
Child	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number
Joseph	.03	1	.97	37
Donna	.57	4	.42	3
Sean	.32	8	.68	17
Erica	.64	38	.36	21

Table 3

Proportions of Mothers' Turns Directed Toward Specific Aspects of the Print Levels

Child	Mother	Letter	Word	Picture	Management/Book
Joseph	62	.32	.52	.13	.03
Donna	8	0	.63	.12	.25
Sean	40	.07	.55	.28	.10
Erica	34	.06	.91	0	.03

Table 4

Proportions of Children's Turns Directed Toward Specific Aspects of the Print Levels

Child	Letter	Word	Picture	Management/Book
Joseph	.47	.37	.16	0
Donna	0	.14	.86	0
Sean	.04	.52	.46	0
Erica	.02	.96	.02	0

Table 5

Proportions of Mother Turns for the Type of Speech Act

	Directive	Statement	Repetition	Aid	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Joseph's mother	.37	.08	.05	.32	.05	.05	.08
Donna's mother	.50	.12	0	.12	.12	.12	0
Sean's mother	.42	.10	.07	.20	.12	.18	0
Erica's mother	.23	.06	.03	.50	.03	.12	.03

Table 6

Case Study Profiles

Child	Percentage of Home Literacy Events				
	Del. High Literacy	Communication Literacy	Television Literacy	Religion Literacy	School Literacy
Joseph (n=61)	13.1	17.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Donna (n=108)	23.1	17.9	9.7	7.4	0.0
Sean (n=55)	41.6	9.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Erica (n=70)	74.0	9.9	2.9	0.0	0.0

Note. The percentage represents the frequency of observed occurrences of events in each category. Daily living events are not included.

Appendix A

A. Coding for Mother's Speech Acts

Requestives

Directive. A question or statement that requests the child to carry out or figure out an action.

Example, "Look at the picture." "Sound it out?" "Can you sound it out?"

Statement. An expression of information, rules or explanation.

Example, "This is the letter 'm' and it makes this sound."

Responsives

Positive. These statements include acceptance and praise to the child's answer.

Example, "That's good." "Yes."

Neutral. Usually a confirmation of an answer without any value of encouragement attached.

Examples, "O.K." "m,m"

Negative. Includes correction and admonishment or an indication by the mother that the child's response was unacceptable.

Examples, "No it's not y." "Are you sure?" "You not trying?"

Aid. When the intent of the mother's response to the child's answer or assertive is to correct the statement by giving the child partial information or by supplying the answer if the

child is incorrect. May include statements or questions that draw the child's attention to previous information or experiences related to prior knowledge.

Examples, "L-u-n-ch, lunch," "Remember when I sat down with you to read . . .," "Another word for stomach," "Do you eat milk?" "What other meal do you have that begins with an 'L'?, "Remember what the silent 'e' does?"

B. Child Speech Act Coding

Assertives. Statements and comments that describe, give information about the current reading task. Includes reading child does voluntarily, without the mother making a directive or statement.

Responsives. Verbal responses to the mother's prompt or directive.

C. Level Coding for Mother and Child Turns

Both the mother's and child's speech acts or turns were coded according to the kind of reading strategy indicated by the verbal exchanges with respect to attention to the print level.

Book/Management. Statements, question or comments that were related to the book or convention of book reading.

Examples, "Turn the page," "Let's start at the top of the page."

Pictures. The mother's or child's speech acts refer to the pictures in the book.

Examples, "Look at the picture to see what he is eating."

Words. Refers to statements, questions or comments that call attention to words, word phrases or sentences.

Examples, "Look at those words," "What do those words say?" "The word is many."

Letters. Statements, questions or comments that call attention to letters, sounds or aspects of decoding.

Examples, "What sound do these letters make?" "Sound it out."

All speech acts, whether requestives or assertives for the mother or assertives or responsives for the child, were coded according to the levels of print.

Appendix B-1

Erica's Mother's Strategies

What

Phonic

Reminds child of vowel rules.

Example - "The 'a' says its name."

Word

1. Supplies word that child has omitted.
2. Says word that child has incorrectly sounded out or read.
3. Supplies word emphasizing syllables.

   Example - "Mud/dy"

Semantic

1. Corrects based on meaning.

   Example - "Taste with your nose?"

How

1. Usually waits until the child has completed sentence or hesitates at the word.
2. Reads the entire sentences that includes the word or phrase that gave the child a problem.
3. Gives information or asks a guiding question.

   Example - "That's a silent 'e'."
4. Corrects own errors that she may make while assisting the child.

   Example - "mud-dee, no, my fault, muddy."

Appendix B-2

Donna's Mother's Strategies

Donna's mother had only one turn that was related to aid.

Semantic

Correct or aid related to meaning.

Example - "You don't eat milk, do you?"

How

Donna's mother used a question.

Sean's Mother's Strategies

Eight of Sean's mother's turns were coded as aid.

Phonic

1. Called Sean's attention to beginning letter sounds.

Word

1. Says the word.

Semantic

1. Based on meaning, uses text or picture to relate to child's previous knowledge.

Example - "You think that might have been breakfast with the sandwiches."

How

1. Used question during and after child read the word or phrase.
2. Makes statement and leaves off the answer to allow the child to fill in (cloze type aid)
3. Repeats word or phrase.

Appendix B-3

Joseph's Mother's Strategies

Twenty of Joseph's mother's turns were coded as aid.

Phonic

1. Sounds out word.
2. Reminds child of rules.

   Example - "Remember this, sounds like the y sound."
3. Supplies isolated sounds.

Word

1. Supplies part of a word by saying a word contained in the larger word.

   Example - "Another word for stomach"

How

1. When the child is attempting to sound out word, the mother takes over the decoding attempt.
2. Mother begins decoding and waits for child to finish.
3. Instructs child to put sounds together.
4. Asks questions or makes statements providing information, usually phonic based.
5. Supplies word after child has attempted decoding usually at the word or letter level, seldom at the phrase or sentence level.

Appendix C

A Profile of Book Reading Interactions

	Parents' Goal	Approach	Striking Features	Mother's Role	Child's Role
Joseph	To recognize and sound out words using letter and sound information.	Elicits attempts to sound out text; emphasizes correct word reading.	High number of responses by child; high number of interactions.	Takes 2/3 of the turns but gives help for 1/3.	Responsive
Donna	To make reading a pleasurable event.	Listens as child attempts to read; make few corrections; corrects only for gross errors; uses picture information.	Few turns by mother or child.	Shares turns.	Responsive and Assertive
Sean	To understand the meaning of the story before reading it.	Balances picture information with print information.	Integrate approach; blending words, recognition with understanding.	Takes nearly 2/3 of the turns.	Responsive
Erica	To understand text and read it accurately.	Directs attention to printed words; provide aid.	High number of verbal initiations by child; high number of interactions between mother and child; high number of statements by mother that provides aid.	Gives help as needed.	Assertive

Appendix D

A Description of the Awareness Responses* and

Print Level Attention During Mother-Child Book Reading

Child	Awareness Responses	Print Level Mother	Print Level Child
Joseph	"My cousin tells me words," "Copy letters," "I sound out words"	Letters/words	Letters/words
Donna	"Letters, my book helps me, it has children in it." "A big blue book"	Words/book	Words/picture
Sean	"My mother teaches me," "Write sentences, picture, ask somebody to read it."	Picture/words	Picture/words
Erica	"Read books, sounds out," "I am real good writer," "Read sentences, tell words, write words." "My mom tells me."	Words	Words

These descriptions represent a compilation of responses obtained in March and May of kindergarten and September of first grade. The bookreading interaction between the parent and child occurred in August prior to first grade.